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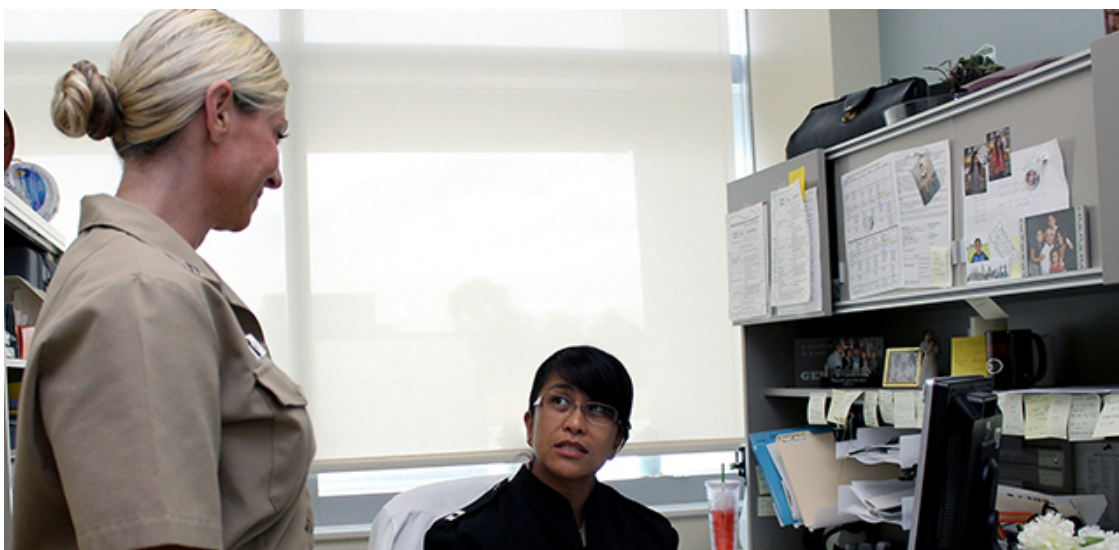
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Written on September 3, 2015 at 6:00 am by [svanderwerff](#)

## Innovating Health and Empowering Patients in a Digital Age

Filed under [Communication](#), [Families](#), [Fleet and the Fleet Marine Force](#) {[no comments](#)}

*By Shannon Smith, Command RelayHealth Champion*



Health care is changing, which is a good thing. Instead of taking care of our patients only when they're sick or injured, we're shifting focus to keep our patients healthy. We are shifting the paradigm from health care to health!

This new focus requires a different way of thinking about health care and a new set of tools, especially in today's fast-paced, digital world.

We stay in touch with our friends and family online. Many of us do our banking online. Why not manage our health online as well?

Many of us, providers and patients alike, are familiar with RelayHealth. This innovative, secure online messaging system was adopted by the Department of Defense (DoD) and used by the Navy's Medical Home Port teams to communicate with patients and colleagues online. I'm not sure that everyone really understands all of its benefits; however, I believe if more patients truly knew what a great tool RelayHealth is, they'd be lining up to enroll.

The number one benefit for most patients is convenience. Would you rather spend fifteen minutes on hold to request a medication refill or schedule a routine appointment with your provider, or would you rather spend a few minutes sending a quick message?

With RelayHealth, patients can schedule non-urgent appointments. It's after 10 p.m. and you didn't have time to call your clinic to schedule a follow-up appointment? No problem. Simply login to RelayHealth, follow the steps to request an appointment, and within one business day your clinic will contact you with your appointment date and time. As an added bonus, you don't have to write it down or try to remember it—it's right there in RelayHealth and you can even get a reminder message.

A new feature of RelayHealth has made it even more convenient—webVisit<sup>®</sup>. This special message is for non-urgent problems or questions and allows patients to complete an online interview based on their symptoms or condition. They can even upload a picture for visual concerns like a rash. Then, their health care team can go over the information and provide self-care instructions or schedule an appointment for an in-office evaluation. Parents can initiate a webVisit<sup>®</sup> for their children as well. When you have a sick child, potentially not having to bring them out of the house is definitely convenient.

At Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton (NHCP), our standard is to reply to all RelayHealth messages in less than one business day (can't answer on weekends). Usually, depending on the day and clinic workflow, we answer messages within a few minutes to a few hours. We can respond so quickly because we have experienced staff dedicated to RelayHealth.



Another great feature of RelayHealth is the ability for patients and providers to upload documents. RelayHealth is where you can securely store important information about your health including medications and allergies, lab results, a summary of health problems and conditions, immunizations, and more.

Imagine being on vacation and you need to visit an urgent care. The doctor who's seeing you has questions about your medical history. All you need to do is pull up your health record on RelayHealth and you can accurately share your information with the provider. This will help ensure that any treatment you receive takes into account your individual health needs, such as current medications.

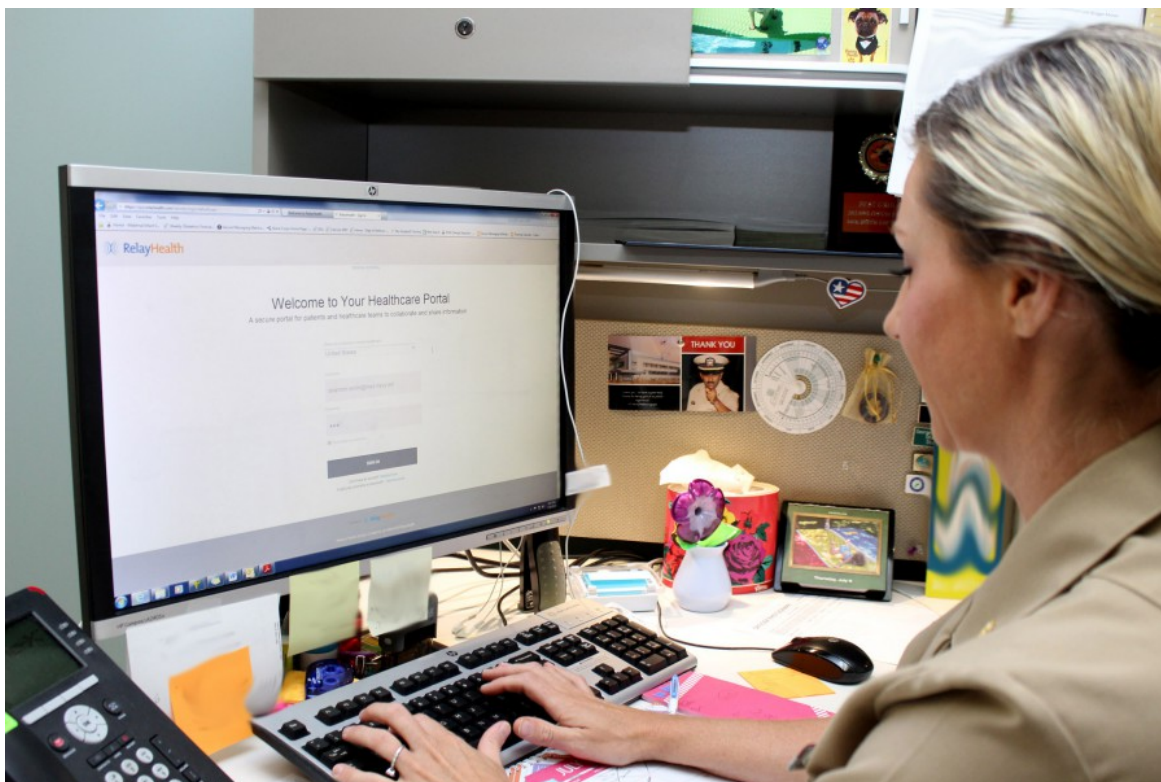
You forgot that sports physical form or other important documents when you came in for the exam? Just send it in as an attachment, and we will send back to you once the provider has it completed. Pretty simple and saves a trip!

What if you're interested in learning more about a specific health condition? Another benefit of RelayHealth is access to a comprehensive patient library with information on thousands of diseases, procedures, and medications. Unlike information you find by doing an Internet search that may (or may not) be reliable, the information RelayHealth provides is evidence-based.

RelayHealth is a tool that every patient needs—even if they don't know it yet. Using RelayHealth doesn't just save patients time, it can also provide peace of mind knowing your healthcare team is just a few clicks away.

RelayHealth also empowers patients to actively participate in their health care experience. When patients can easily ask questions about their health, they become more knowledgeable, engaged, and an active participant. RelayHealth encourages patients to become partners with their providers, while working to stay healthy and connected in today's digital age.

To register as a patient in RelayHealth simply visit [www.relayhealth.com](http://www.relayhealth.com). If you are a patient at Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton, you can sign up for [RelayHealth here](#). Most importantly, make sure you add your provider under the provider tab. This step, and this alone, will be what connects you to your PCM.



### ***NHCP Staff Member Testimonial:***

*We all know RelayHealth isn't for same day inquiries, so when I don't need something pressing from my PCM, it is all that much easier to sit in my office and send her an email via RelayHealth. The responses I receive are always prompt and provide me with help; adding to that the ease of not having to find time to sneak away from my busy clinic schedule, it makes RelayHealth worth it.*

*I'll admit in the beginning I was skeptical, I felt I would not need to utilize the system and only signed up because I was being asked to, in the end though, I am happy I did; it allows me to take charge of my own medical care and helps to relieve any stress I might feel by being able to get answers without having to hunt anyone down."*

### ***Spouse Beneficiary Testimonial:***

*I love RelayHealth! It's so convenient to be able to email my doctor and his staff whenever I have a question or when something comes up, like a needed appointment or if I need some advice. I can email any time, day or night, and from anywhere (at home on my computer or when I'm away from home on my smartphone), and I know I will receive a response quickly. It's so much easier and less time consuming than trying to navigate the phone system or wait on a call back. And my doctor and nurses are always more than happy to address my needs via the system. It's definitely increased my satisfaction with my healthcare providers; I highly recommend it to any patient!"*

### ***NHCP Staff Provider Testimonial:***

*"It can help prevent "You never told me that," because it is in black and white!*

*I use it in conjunction with ASUTYPE which has macros, so for frequently asked things (such as what do I do with a consult) I have pre-done text so it can go quickly. You can do that with any piece of advice including lab results, possible side effects, what to do for a common illness...whatever questions you frequently encounter. (For instance, I just type "lab" and "Laboratory is located on the Main Floor –*



*Middle area. 760-719-3407, their hours are M-F 0730-1600,” populates the screen)*

*Following up for labs and radiology reports is easy. I usually review my results before morning clinic and I can't call anyone because it is too early, but I can RelayHealth them. I also find that a lot of people don't accept blocked calls so if I do try to call them, I wind up playing phone tag. It also works well if I am in between things and may not have time for a full telephone conversation, but can work on an email.*

*Appointing is much easier. I tell my patients to use RelayHealth for an appointment, and if I am emailing them about a problem and decide they should be seen I just add my nurse to the message so a scheduled appointment can be made. It also works well for follow up. If I want to know how someone is doing because of their acute illness or I started them on a new med, I can just have them follow up via RelayHealth.”*

### **NHCP RelayHealth Command Champion Testimonial:**

*“I often feel a little bit like the ‘RelayHealth Police.’ However, I do understand the importance of secure messaging and the analytics it captures for Navy Medicine. Medicine, whether civilian or military, is moving to the direction of virtual care due to increasing demands in health care.*

*I have been dedicated to encouraging all eligible staff members to enroll. Working in the health care setting makes it easier to navigate the system; however, if staff members know all the tools and capabilities of the system, they are able to have a more informed and confident conversation with our beneficiaries. Having personal accounts ultimately will lead to an improved patient experience both with RelayHealth, and Navy Medicine.”*

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